

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 04910 021055Z  
ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SYE-00 SSO-00 /006 W  
-----042047 021103Z /16

O 020957Z AUG 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4233  
AMCONGEN ALEXANDRIA IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE  
SAM 86972 IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4910

SY CHANNEL

DEPT. FOR HICKEY, SY/PRS; D'URSO, PRS/DD; SY/CC/TAGS  
ALEXANDRIA FOR ROCHE, SY/PRS  
AMMAN FOR SY ADVANCE  
BEIRUT FOR SY ADVANCE  
SAM 86972 FOR ROCHE, SY/PRS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: ASEC  
SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S TRIP TO MIDDLE EAST - DAMASCUS INTELLIGENCE  
ESTIMATE

REF: (A) STATE 175984, (B) DAMASCUS 4801, (C) STATE 177262

THE FOLLOWING REPORT IS BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH RSO  
EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER, POLITICAL ATTACHE AND GENERAL  
KHOULI, CHIEF OF SYRAIN AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE.

1. AT THIS TIME (8/2) THERE APPEARS TO BE NO KNOWN THREATS  
DIRECTED AGAINST SECRETARY VANCE. ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT  
IN DAMASCUS HAS NOT SURFACED FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND IT IS  
DOUBTFUL THAT THE SECRETARY WILL RECEIVE ANYTHING BUT  
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A CORDIAL WELCOME FROM THE SYRIAN PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT.  
DURING THIS VISIT, SYRIAN PROTECTIVE SECURITY WILL BE  
HEAVY AND THEY APPEAR TO BE VERY CAPABLE OF HANDLING ANY  
UNFORESEEN INCIDENT.

2. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NO SPECIFIC THREATS DIRECTED AGAINST  
THE UNITED STATES AND SECRETARY VANCE, IT SHOULD BE NOTED

THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION IN DAMASCUS IS POTENTIALLY VOLATILE. THERE ARE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS IN DAMASCUS WHO SEEK TO OVERTHROW AND/OR EMBARASS THE PRESENT SYRIAN GOVERNMENT LED BY PRESIDENT ASSAD. PAST INCIDENTS SUCH AS THE ASSASSINATIONS OF THREE PROMINENT SYRIANS DURING 1977, THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM IN DECEMBER 1976, AND THE NUMEROUS BOMBINGS IN DAMASCUS, THE MOST RECENT IN MID JULY INDICATE A TENSE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE. CONSEQUENTLY, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT CERTAIN GROUPS IN DAMASCUS HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO STRIKE OUT AT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT DESPITE INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES BY THE SYRIAN SECURITY APPARATUS.

3. THE QUESTION IS, WILL THESE GROUPS USE THE SECRETARY'S VISIT AS A FORUM FOR THEIR ANTI-GOVERNMENT SENTIMENTS SINCE THE WORLD PRESS WILL BE FOCUSED ON DAMASCUS DURING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT? THE ANSWER IS TWO-FOLD: (A) SYRIAN SECURITY IS HEAVY AND EXPERIENCED IN HANDLING VISITING DIGNITARIES. GENERAL KHOULI, WHO WILL BE IN OPERATIONAL CHARGE OF THE SECURITY FOR THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, IS ALSO IN CHARGE OF THE PERSONAL PROTECTION OF PRESIDENT ASSAD. GIVEN THE NORMAL HEAVY SECURITY PLACED ON VISITING DIGNITARIES, PARTICULARLY THE SECRETARY OF STATE, ANY ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE OR DISRUPT ACTIVITY IN THE VICINITY OF THE SECRETARY IS DOUBTFUL. HOWEVER, INDIVIDUALS BENT ON EMBARRASSING THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT MAY ATTEMPT A CONFIDENTIAL

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BOMBING SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY, THEREBY GAINING WORLDWIDE PUBLICITY WITH WHICH TO ADVANCE THEIR CAUSE.

MURPHY

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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